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SUBJECT: INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS CONTROL STRATEGY REPORT, PART I

REF: STATE 136787

[¶](#)1. (U) Post presents its 2008 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report, Part I, Drugs and Chemical Control

Guyana:

[¶](#)I. Summary

Guyana is a transit point for cocaine destined for North America, Europe, and the Caribbean, but not in quantities sufficient to impact the U.S. market. In 2007, domestic seizures of cocaine were considerably higher than the previous year due to improved counternarcotics measures at the working level, although all but one of these seizures were minor in scale. The Government of Guyana (GOG) laid the groundwork for an enhanced security sector by agreeing to a reform program sponsored by the British government; it also arrested Terrence Sugrim, an accused drug trafficker wanted by the U.S., and initiated the extradition process.

However, more than two years after launching its National Drug Strategy Master Plan (NDSMP) for 2005-2009, the GOG has not effectively implemented it. Cooperation among law enforcement bodies is fragmented and minimally productive; weak border controls and limited resources for law enforcement allow drug traffickers to move shipments via river, air, and land without meaningful resistance. Guyana is a party to the 1988 UN Drug Convention.

II. Status of Country

Guyana is a transit country for cocaine, and to a lesser degree marijuana. Guyana's vast expanse of unpopulated forest and savannahs offers ample cover for drug traffickers and other smugglers. Government counternarcotics efforts are undermined by inadequate resources for law enforcement, poor coordination among law enforcement agencies, an inefficient judiciary, and a colonial-era legal system badly in need of modernization. The Guyanese media regularly report murders, kidnappings, and other violent crimes commonly believed to be linked with narcotics trafficking. Guyana produces high-grade cannabis, but not coca leaf or cocaine. Guyana is not known to produce, trade, or transit precursor chemicals on a large scale.

III. Country Actions Against Drugs in 2007

Policy Initiatives. In 2007, the GOG signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Great Britain to implement a \$5 million, multi-year program for reform of the security sector, which includes enhancing the investigative capacity of law enforcement agencies. The GOG requested and received \$500,000 in U.S. Department of Defense funds to refurbish its only seaworthy Coast Guard vessel, to help secure its borders and interdict drug traffickers and other smugglers along its 285-mile coastline. Guyana commenced issuance of machine-readable passports, in accordance with the International Civil Aviation Organization's (ICAO) standards, which will help thwart the use of identity fraud in cross-border criminal

activities. Additionally, the government has tabled legislation that would augment the tools currently available to it in fighting money laundering, including regulations to allow for the seizure of assets; the chances for its passage are unclear.

The positive steps of 2007 notwithstanding, the GOG has accomplished few of the principal goals laid out in its ambitious NDSMP that was launched in June 2005. The Joint Intelligence Coordination Center (JICC), the formation of which was a central element of the 2005 NDSMP, is defunct. In its place, a task force covering narcotics and illegal weapons has been assembled by the Minister for Home Affairs and meets monthly, but there remains limited productive interaction or intelligence sharing among the organizations involved.

Law Enforcement Efforts. Despite the lack of adequate resources, poor inter-agency coordination, and allegations of corruption, 2007 saw modest improvements in enforcement at the working level. Through October, Guyanese law enforcement agencies seized 167 kgs of cocaine, a nearly threefold increase over the amount seized in all of 2006. In May, the Customs Anti-Narcotics Unit (CANU) seized 106 kilograms of cocaine hidden in dried fish glue at a home near Georgetown, and arrested four men in connection with the operation; one of these individuals was sentenced in November to ten years in prison and fined \$1.2 million. In July, police arrested Terrence Sugrim, an accused drug trafficker who had been indicted in New York federal court a few weeks earlier; his possible extradition to the U.S. is under appeal by the defense.

Guyana's counternarcotics activities are encumbered by the peculiarities of a British colonial-era legal system that has not been updated to reflect the needs of modern-day law enforcement. There are no laws that support plea bargaining, wiretapping, or the use of DNA evidence, nor are there laws against racketeering or

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conspiracy. Even when more contemporary crime fighting tools are available to one law enforcement body, they are not necessarily available to others. At Guyana's international airport, for example, the Guyana Revenue Authority (GRA) operates surveillance cameras to help thwart tax fraud. But the cameras are not well-placed to aid counternarcotics operations, video footage is not shared with narcotics authorities and it is not clear that it would be admissible in drug-related court proceedings. In all cases, law enforcement agencies are hamstrung by meager personnel budgets. There are no routine patrols of the numerous land entry points on the 1,800 miles of border with Venezuela, Brazil, and Suriname.

The GoG has not identified or confronted major drug traffickers and their organizations. While the GPF Narcotics Branch and CANU arrested dozens of drug couriers at Guyana's international airport en route to the Caribbean, North America, and Europe, the arrests were limited to individuals with small amounts of marijuana, crack cocaine or powder cocaine, usually on charges of possession for the purpose of trafficking.

Corruption. There is no evidence that the GOG or senior GOG officials encourage or facilitate the illicit production, processing, shipment or distribution of narcotic or psychotropic drugs or other controlled substances, or the laundering of proceeds from illegal drug transactions. News media routinely report on instances of corruption reaching to high levels of government that are not investigated and thus go unpunished, but no conclusive evidence is available to back up these claims. It is widely believed that drug trafficking organizations in Guyana continue to elude law enforcement agencies through bribes and coercion, but substantiating information is anecdotal at best. Guyana is party to the Inter-American Convention Against Corruption (IACAC), but has yet to fully implement its provisions, such as seizure of property obtained through corruption. Guyana is not a party to the UN Convention against Corruption.

Agreements and Treaties. Guyana is party to the 1988 UN Drug Convention, the 1961 UN Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, as amended by the 1972 Protocol, and the 1971 UN Convention on Psychotropic Substances. Guyana also is a party to the UN Convention

against Transnational Organized Crime and its protocol on trafficking in persons. The 1931 Extradition Treaty between the United States and the United Kingdom is applicable to the U.S. and Guyana, although there is no bilateral mutual legal assistance treaty between the U.S. and Guyana. In March 2006, Guyana signed the OAS Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty, to which the US is a party; assistance has also been regularly provided on an informal basis. Guyana signed a bilateral agreement with the U.S. on maritime counternarcotics cooperation in 2001; however, it has not yet taken the necessary domestic actions to bring the agreement into force. Guyana has bilateral agreements to cooperate on drug trafficking issues with its neighbors and with the United Kingdom. Guyana is also a member of the Organization of American States' Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (OAS/CICAD).

Cultivation and Production. A very high-grade form of cannabis is grown in Guyana, primarily in the intermediate savannahs, and its cultivation is reportedly increasing. Guyana is not a producer of cocaine or opium poppy.

Drug Flow/Transit. There are no reliable estimates regarding the amount of cocaine or cannabis that transits Guyana. According to USG law enforcement authorities, Guyanese narcotics traffickers regularly move shipments of cocaine through the country. Some cannabis cultivated in Guyana is also smuggled out of the country, although in more modest quantities. In 2007, a shipment of heroin was seized in Guyana for the first time in recent memory.

Drugs flow easily through Guyana's uncontrolled borders and coastline. Light aircraft land at numerous isolated airstrips or make airdrops where operatives on the ground retrieve the drugs. Smugglers use small boats and freighters to enter Guyana's many remote but navigable rivers. Smugglers also take direct routes, such as driving or boating across the borders with Brazil, Suriname, and Venezuela. Inside the country, narcotics are transported to Georgetown by road, water, or air and then sent on to the Caribbean, North America, or Europe via commercial air carriers or cargo ships.

Authorities have arrested drug mules attempting to smuggle small amounts of cocaine on virtually every northbound route out of the international airport; in 2007 there was a surge in law enforcement seizures at the airport of suitcases carrying drugs that had been added to the baggage queue after check-in, and tagged in the names of unsuspecting passengers. Police officials also witnessed a notable upward trend in the use of the Guyana Post Office as an avenue for the trafficking of cocaine in small quantities, further demonstrating the malleable tactics of trafficking organizations.

Demand Reduction (Domestic Programs). Marijuana is sold and consumed openly in Guyana, despite frequent arrests for possessing small amounts of cannabis. Sources within the GOG and a local NGO note

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that consumption of all psychotropic substances in Guyana is increasing, with a particularly dramatic rise in the use of ecstasy.

Marijuana use has been seen among children as young as eleven years old. Guyana's ability to deal with drug abusers is hampered by the modest financial resources to support rehabilitation programs. Guyana only has two facilities that treat substance abuse -- the Salvation Army and the Phoenix Recovery Center. There are no programs to deal with substance abuse in the prisons.

IV. U.S. Policy Initiatives and Programs

U.S. Policy Initiatives. U.S. policy focuses on cooperating with Guyana's law enforcement agencies, promoting good governance, and facilitating demand reduction programs. In 2007, the USG continued to encourage Guyanese participation in bilateral and multilateral counternarcotics initiatives, and funded a substance abuse treatment program for women (the two previously existing programs in Guyana only funded treatment for men). The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) is funding projects to improve governance in Guyana, which includes parliamentary and judicial reform.

Bilateral Cooperation. The DEA works with Guyana's government and law enforcement agencies to provide training and develop initiatives

that will enhance their counternarcotics activities. The GOG routinely grants diplomatic credentials to DEA officers who cover Guyana from the U.S. Embassy in Trinidad, and working level collaboration is generally positive.

The Road Ahead. Neither the GoG nor the various drug enforcement bodies of the U.S. have dedicated the resources to determine the quantity of illegal drugs flowing through Guyana. All projections are speculative based on the few seizures made. In the absence of both sound data and more robust DEA/INL involvement, the U.S. will not augment resources for investigation and interdiction in Guyana. Instead it will continue to channel any future assistance to initiatives that demonstrate success in treating substance abusers. The U.S. will also continue to use its diplomatic tools to encourage the GoG to organize an effective counternarcotics program, especially within the context of the British-funded overhaul of the security sector.

ROBINSON